



JOHN A. HARTWELL

1869-1940

## IN MEMORIAM

## JOHN A. HARTWELL

In the death of our Ex-President and Ex-Director, John A. Hartwell, the Academy has suffered a very great loss. Captain Liddell Hart in his "Reputations Ten Years After" says of General Gallieni, the real author of the Miracle of the Marne: "but the finest epitaph and that most acceptable surely to him, is also the simplest: 'Gallieni —la tête haute.'" How descriptive of Hartwell! I can imagine no truer motto for him throughout his whole career in athletics, teaching, surgery, and his later executive positions.

My acquaintance with him began as an undergraduate at college where one of my early memories of him is his futile but game pursuit of Lee, who scored a winning touchdown in a Yale-Harvard game. As captain of the famous '92 Crew, which made in June the second fastest record time at New London, he displayed his courage, a dominant trait throughout his life, in the removal against the advice of the coach of a famous powerful, but overweight member of the crew who had also rowed the year before but could not pull his own weight in the boat. Whatever the odds, once his mind was made up that a course of action was desirable "Josh" fought indomitably, sometimes with steam-roller methods, to accomplish his purpose. And he was usually right! Another early recollection is in Professor Chittenden's laboratory, Sheffield Scientific School. I was puzzled in some mathematical calculation when Chittenden finally remarked impatiently: "Josh Hartwell would never have done this, but then he was bright!"

In looking over Dr. Hartwell's vast number of professional appointments, both teaching and hospital, it is difficult to know which to emphasize. Shortly after graduation as intern he became Instructor and in 1901 Assistant Professor of Physiology at Cornell and then, as natural in one who had come

through Chittenden's laboratory, did much research work. His experiments in high intestinal obstruction in dogs and the prolongation of life by large parenteral doses of normal saline is fundamental, and has become the basis of subsequent treatment in humans. On the academic side, in the various grades of Assistant Professor of Surgery, Associate Professor of Surgery, Professor of Clinical Surgery and Professor Emeritus of Surgery at Cornell from 1909 to 1936, he threw the same energy into the instruction of medical youth that distinguished him in his own hospital and private practice. His main hospital interests were at Bellevue to which he became attached in 1903, rising through various grades until in 1916 he became Visiting Surgeon and Director of the 2nd Division and finally Consultant in 1928. Into all this work Dr. Hartwell again threw all of his energy and it was in this period that he organized the Cornell Clinic where patients of moderate means received expert care for a small fee. No one of his appointments gave him more pleasure than his nomination in 1908 to the post of Assistant Surgeon at Presbyterian Hospital, where he had interned. Well do I remember the dinner given at the University Club on this occasion and Josh's delight. This connection lasted until the union of Columbia and Presbyterian Hospital and the consequent withdrawal of the Cornell members from the staff. In all of his hospital and teaching appointments he had something of the attitude which later characterized him in his executive positions, the courage to fight for what he considered right, regardless of opposition. This was ably satirized by Dr. Corwin in his speech at the Academy Dinner on Dr. Hartwell's retirement from the Directorship which described him as a mixture of Don Quixote and Cato. Yet throughout his speech this truth was emphasized; he was essentially a crusader with all the virtues and

vices characteristic of that type of mind. This, however, was qualified by a rare judgment of men and a diplomacy which enabled him to use even those who disagreed with him on details.

During the war he held the rank of major and taught war surgery to surgeons entering the army and was instrumental in standardizing surgical dressings used in the army. In France in 1918-19 he was assigned to duty with the Chief Surgeon of the First Army.

His association with the Academy began with his election as fellow in 1901. He served on the Public Health Committee from 1917 to 1929 and at this time began his acquaintance with public health problems which later, in his Presidency and Directorate, gave him the knowledge to speak with authority before civic and legislative boards. This he did convincingly on many occasions, becoming widely known as the civic, state and, to a lesser extent national, mouthpiece of medical opinion. Here he struck a mean between the extreme liberal and extreme conservative positions. He was particularly interested in the fight against cancer and in 1939 became Associate Director of the American Society for the Control of Cancer. He made frequent appearances before legislative committees in Albany to protest against the enactment of legislation which would prohibit experiments on living dogs. He was a determined opponent of fee-splitting and also directed attention to the dangers of overspecialization and urged that there be more physicians of the

type of old-fashioned family doctor who was skilled in all branches of medicine and specialized in none.

As Director of the Academy of Medicine he was faced with the problem of declining revenue and the necessity, in the eyes of many of his associates, of balancing the budget. Full of optimism, which with his invincible courage was perhaps one of his two most distinguishing characteristics, he declined to cut down any of the Academy's activities, insisting that appeals to the public could balance the budget and it was unthinkable that the Academy should curtail any of its Public Health, Medical Education, or Medical Information work. During all of his later years he was crippled much of the time by vascular trouble of the legs, which had plagued him ever since an attack of typhoid phlebitis during his hospital internship. Directing the affairs of the Academy from a hospital bed, or from his oscillating table, and being carried on a stretcher to vote or to a duck blind, he seems here to be carrying out to the full the motto, "La Tête Haute."

Always an ardent sportsman, he was a member of the Board of Directors of "More Game Birds in America" and it was his expressed hope that he might die with a fishing rod or a gun in his hand. In the end death came as his guide handed him his gun on his last duck-shoot.

LEWIS FOX FRISSELL.